

DEATH VALLEY DRIVER

VIDEO REVIEW #165



WELCOME TO THE DEATH VALLEY DRIVER VIDEO REVIEW #165!

Your cover is by Bay area artist extraordinaire, Andrea Schneider. And yeah, it fucking rules.

Ahhh we got excuses for the lay off but you don't want to hear them and we don't feel like lying to you. We do have the CULMINATION of the hours and hours of hardwork the BEST of the 80s crew did for the OTHER JAPAN poll which was wildly more successful than I'm sure even their most optimistic projections. Here we go....

THE BEST OF THE 80s OTHER JAPAN PROMOTIONS POLL RESULTS AND REVIEW OF THE TOP 15!!

The votes are in. 66 folks watched hours upon hours of non-All Japan and non-New Japan eighties Japanese wrestling and we- the Illuminati of Wrestling Dorkdom Assembled- have SPOKEN! And Chris Harrington has tabulated! Your results:

1. Nobuhiko Takada vs Akira Maeda (11/10/88 UWF) [4296 pts]
2. Yoshiaki Fujiwara vs Super Tiger (12/5/84 UWF) [4268 pts]
3. Nobuhiko Takada vs Bob Backlund (12/22/88 UWF) [4255 pts]
4. Riki Choshu vs Genichiro Tenryu (2/21/85 JPW) [4253 pts]
5. Yoshiaki Fujiwara vs Super Tiger (7/17/85 UWF) [4217 pts]
6. Masakatsu Funaki vs Tatsuo Nakano (7/24/89 UWF) [4076 pts]
7. Super Tiger vs Yoshiaki Fujiwara (9/7/84 UWF) [3982 pts]
8. Yoshiaki Fujiwara vs Kazuo Yamazaki (1/7/85 UWF) [3928 pts]
9. Yoshiaki Fujiwara vs Super Tiger (9/11/85 UWF) [3815 pts]
10. Kazuo Yamazaki vs Nobuhiko Takada (8/13/88 UWF) [3789 pts]
11. Yoshiaki Fujiwara vs Kazuo Yamazaki (7/24/89 UWF) [3756 pts]
12. Super Tiger/Nobuhiko Takada vs Akira Maeda/Yoshiaki Fujiwara (7/23/84 UWF) [3674 pts]
13. Akira Maeda vs Kazuo Yamazaki (5/12/88 UWF) [3592 pts]
14. Atsushi Onita vs Masashi Aoyagi (10/6/89 FMW) [3590 pts]
15. Kazuo Yamazaki vs Nobuhiko Takada (9/11/85 UWF) [3580 pts]
16. Yoshiaki Fujiwara vs Akira Maeda (3/2/85 UWF) [3537 pts]
17. Yoshiaki Fujiwara vs Nobuhiko Takada (10/22/84 UWF) [3416 pts]
18. Nobuhiko Takada vs Yoshiaki Fujiwara (10/25/89 UWF) [3386 pts]
19. Yoji Anjoh vs Masakatsu Funaki (6/14/89 UWF) [3349 pts]
20. Super Tiger vs Akira Maeda (9/11/84 UWF) [3312 pts]
21. Super Tiger vs Nobuhiko Takada (9/6/85 UWF) [3308 pts]
22. Akira Maeda vs Kazuo Yamazaki (5/21/89 UWF) [3248 pts]
23. Kazuo Yamazaki vs Nobuhiko Takada (5/4/89 UWF) [3223 pts]
24. Bob Backlund vs Masakatsu Funaki (5/21/89 UWF) [3179 pts]
25. Atsushi Onita vs Masashi Aoyagi (6/2/89 Ultimate Karate Ikki Kajiwar Memorial) [3112 pts]
26. El Gran Hamada vs Perro Aguayo (4/11/84 UWF) [3096 pts]
27. Nobuhiko Takada vs Akira Maeda (1/10/89 UWF) [3089 pts]

28. Kazuo Yamazaki vs Nobuhiko Takada (12/5/84 UWF) [3072 pts]
29. Nobuhiko Takada vs Yoshiaki Fujiwara (7/8/85 UWF) [3016 pts]
30. Super Tiger vs Yoshiaki Fujiwara (6/24/85 UWF) [2979 pts]
31. Riki Choshu/Yoshiaki Yatsu/Kuniaki Kobayashi vs Hiro Saito/Shunji Takano/Super Strong Machine (11/2/85 JPW) [2953 pts]
32. Akira Maeda vs Kazuo Yamazaki (2/18/85 UWF) [2832 pts]
33. Akira Maeda vs Yoshiaki Fujiwara (8/13/89 UWF) [2788 pts]
34. Yoji Anjoh vs Minoru Suzuki (10/25/89 UWF) [2752 pts]
35. Yoshiaki Fujiwara vs Akira Maeda (7/13/85 UWF) [2732 pts]
36. Yoshiaki Fujiwara vs Masakatsu Funaki (5/4/89 UWF) [2711 pts]
37. Super Tiger vs Marty Jones (3/2/85 UWF) [2668 pts]
38. Akira Maeda vs Super Tiger (1/7/85 UWF) [2601 pts]
39. Super Tiger/Joe Malenko vs Yoshiaki Fujiwara/Osamu Kido (5/25/85 UWF) [2594 pts]
40. Akira Maeda vs Gerard Gourdeau (8/13/88 UWF) [2415 pts]
41. Super Tiger vs Nobuhiko Takada (7/21/85 UWF) [2412 pts]
42. Yoji Anjoh vs Minoru Suzuki (4/14/89 UWF) [2395 pts]
43. Yoshiaki Fujiwara vs Osamu Kido (9/6/85 UWF) [2394 pts]
44. Akira Maeda vs Kazuo Yamazaki (10/22/84 UWF) [2318 pts]
45. Nobuhiko Takada vs Marty Jones (2/18/85 UWF) [2305 pts]
46. Mighty Inoue/Higo Hamaguchi vs Carlos Plata & El Doberman (11/27/80 IWE) [2257 pts]
47. Yoshiaki Fujiwara vs Osamu Kido (2/18/85 UWF) [2249 pts]
48. Kazuo Yamazaki vs Yoji Anjoh (8/13/89 UWF) [2187 pts]
49. Yoshiaki Fujiwara vs Kazuo Yamazaki (8/29/85 UWF) [2095 pts]
50. Shozo Kobayashi/Haruka Eigen vs Mighty Inoue/Isamu Teranishi (6/29/80 IWE) [2085 pts]
51. Nobuhiko Takada vs Akira Maeda (5/25/85 UWF) [2058 pts]
52. Osamu Kido vs Akira Maeda (1/29/85 UWF) [2037 pts]
53. Tarzan Goto vs Mitsuhiro Matsunaga (12/4/89 FMW) [1998 pts]
54. Yoshiaki Fujiwara vs Yoji Anjoh (5/21/89 UWF) [1939 pts]
55. Carlos Plata/El Doberman/Goro Tsurumi vs Higo Hamaguchi/Isamu Teranishi/Mach Hayato (11/22/80 IWE) [1846 pts]
56. Pete Roberts/Akira Maeda vs Keith Hayward/Osamu Kido (12/5/84 UWF) [1713 pts]
57. Mighty Inoue/Higo Hamaguchi vs Spike Huber/Rocky Brewer (7/25/80 IWE) [1692 pts]
58. Higo Hamaguchi/Isamu Teranishi/Mach Hayato vs El Cobarde/Herodes/Goro Tsurumi (3/26/81 IWE) [1686 pts]
59. Masami Soronaka vs Scott McGhee (12/5/84 UWF) [1596 pts]
60. Nobuhiko Takada vs Masami Soronaka (3/2/85 UWF) [1566 pts]
61. Osamu Kido vs Yoshiaki Fujiwara (7/25/85 UWF) [1533 pts]
62. Ryuma Go vs Atsushi Onita (4/30/89 Pioneer) [1501 pts]
63. Carlos Plata/El Doberman vs Mighty Inoue/Mach Hayato (11/1/80 IWE)

[1455 pts]

- 64. Atsushi Onita/Dick Murdoch vs Masanobu Kurisu/Jos LeDuc (12/4/89 FMW) [1441 pts]
- 65. Minoru Suzuki vs Johnny Barrett (10/1/89 UWF) [1387 pts]
- 66. Osamu Kido vs Super Tiger (7/8/85 UWF) [1379 pts]
- 67. Osamu Kido vs Akira Maeda (7/21/85 UWF) [1306 pts]
- 68. Yuko Miyato vs Minoru Suzuki (5/4/89 UWF) [1275 pts]
- 69. Cuban Assassin/Phil Lafleur vs Super Tiger/Osamu Kido (10/22/84 UWF) [1270 pts]
- 70. Super Tiger vs Osamu Kido (8/29/85 UWF) [1118 pts]
- 71. Killer Khan vs Stan Hansen (??/??/86 JPW) [969 pts]
- 72. Kazuo Yamazaki vs Jack Snuka (9/11/84 UWF) [752 pts]
- 73. Rusher Kimura vs Alexis Smirnoff (11/22/80 IWE) [627 pts]
- 74. Jimmy Backlund vs Mitsuteru Tokuda (10/6/89 FMW) [538 pts]
- 75. Kazuo Yamazaki vs Chris Dolman (11/29/89 UWF) [506 pts]

Please now go to the greatness that is CHRIS HARRINGTON's PREPOSTEROUSLY AWESOME STATS and ANALYSIS.

The top 15 matches- a closer look.

1. Nobuhiko Takada vs Akira Maeda (11/10/88 UWF) [4308 pts] DEAN: I had this at number two but I could have just easily gone for it at number one. You know how these things go by this point. In the WWF ballot I could have just as easily gone with Sgt Slaughter vs the Iron Shiek- but one's number one should be the one that spoke the most to you personally- and that match the Valentine/Garvin match for me, THUS it was my number one. Same way with this. This match drives the fans to such molten levels of hotness that you are sucked in and all other matches appear small or a lot smaller. I thought the Fujiwara/Yamazaki was a smaller match but such a colossal ass-beating wrapped around a cool story that it edges out the heat of these two beating the fuck out of each other. Let's roll it again. Both start stoic and melancholy, fiddling with kicks that the crowd is already into, circling and grabbing and doing some stalemate stuff to build to the gushy climax in the end. The major difference between the 1985 Maeda matches and 1988 matches is that he wittled the boring pointless matwork down to three minutes a match, down from the ten minutes of shitty kneebars. It's amazing that these guys could watch Fujiwara lay out a match night after night and it still take 3 years and another foray into bigtime Japanese non-shootstyle wrestling to figure out that two guys in black trunks wallowing around half-heartedly trying to escape a halfcrab for 60% of the match is really fucking horrible. This does have a really crappy half-assed kneebar section right in the middle of the match but Maeda's facial expressions while applying the Fujiwara armbar begins the "thawing" phase of the match and moves it into the "blindingly white-hot" phase of the match. Takada cuts him off and goes for keylock that Maeda progressively sells with more urgency- and it's really boring to both of them, so they both stand up and start kicking the living shit out of each other. Maeda gets the first knockdown and Takada punches back to offense. Maeda cuts him off with the Suplex into Quarter-Nelson into the Fujiwara armbar and Takada is selling it like it hurts- falling behind by two points by hitting the ropes like a pansy. Maeda jumps on top of him as he gets up

and gets the second knockdown. See, this is where the point system in UWF is awesome. You don't get the 6 comebacks by Steamboat against Flair because it would be a TKO after the 4th escape from the Figure Four. It's counter the Southern style of babyface selling- in that you have to have bigger comebacks, as Takada shows by storming back with three knockdowns and a nearfall until he is finally cut by a Maeda reversal and a submission. More of New Japan strong style simple story as the crowd is chanting both men's names and popping big for Takada's reversal into the until this point useless and time-killing half-crab spot. Takada is demonic as he drags Maeda to the center of the ring even more awesomely intense as he suplexes Maeda to the center to put Maeda on the brink with the ropebreak equally the fourth knockdown. The crowd is insane for Takada's final flurry and Maeda is fuckin AWWWESOME showing the desperation and futility of trying to avoid the last knockdown. The last thirty seconds is key to getting this match over the top. Maeda is flawless in making the finish gigantic. Pretty much everything you want in a wrestling match and it's great to watch them progress from the unwatchable shit from the first UWF to something this complex and violent and well executed. I didn't even mention all that charisma.

2. Yoshiaki Fujiwara vs Super Tiger (12/5/84 UWF) [4279 pts] DEAN: This was my favorite of the Fujiwara/Super Tiger series. Some folks didn't like it because Fujiwara really takes a pretty man-sized assbeating- but I dig it because it is such a giant step from their perfectly fine first match. Here, Super Tiger finally realizes that Fujiwara wants and then demands SHEER HATRED and VIOLENCE and steps up to the plate like he doesn't ever do again in the whole six disk set (though he hints at it when he and Marty Jones beat each other to death- a match I will not whine about being left off. Though one really could replace a few in this list with that. But I digress.) Here, it is quite the Ikeda/Ishikawa-Regal/Benoit style Respect Through Stiffness (or however they rationalize such hellish beatings) and it doesn't bother me that Fujiwara takes the brunt of it to the teeth. Fujiwara grounds ST early and when ST escapes and they are at a vertical base, Fujiwara lets you now that he wants no part of ST kicking him really hard. It's funny that I would bring up Ishikawa/Ikeda (I'm a genius!) because you can tell that Ishikawa used this match as a springboard in his classics with Ikeda- with Ikeda being the most Hell-spawned Super Tiger Ever to Ishikawa's mat-based underdog Fujiwara. Fujiwara starts it with the body punches and Super Tiger responds with the fucking NASTY kneedrops to the back of the head. Fuck, half of Super Tiger's offense is illegal in the United States- as it is basically kicking Fujiwara in the back of the head as Fujiwara lays on the ground, trying to protect himself. Fujiwara's flurry of punches directly to the kidneys of young Super Tiger help erase any sympathy you have for the old fella, but he doesn't ask for your sympathy- he just asks you to stand still while he punches you. Super Tiger actually conveys a subtle but effective sign of desperation right before the final flurry. He escapes the armbar and lays on the ropes collecting his thoughts and you can tell it is from that point that the story is completely set- Fujiwara is not going to be beaten on the mat so I, Super Tiger, must beat the living dogpiss out of him. Fujiwara drives it home with his frustration at having to break the final submission attempt- as he headbutts Super Tiger during the break, showing that he isn't going to beat Super Tiger by trying match strikes and each of these attempts could be the last. The whole last third of the match where it is basically Super Tiger kneeling Fujiwara on the top of the head and then just fucking ANNIHILATING him with kneedrops is just TOO fucking MANLY. Fujiwara's FIGHTING

SPIRIT~! in his final comeback flurry before just eating white hot knees and feet to the face is fucking legendarily awesome.

3. Nobuhiko Takada vs Bob Backlund (12/22/88 UWF) [4266 pts] NAYLOR: I think this was one of the more emotionally charged matches of this style I've ever seen. You had Backlund... highly respected amateur wrestler...coming off of a bit of a blackballing in the US after long being out of the picture in WWWF, WWF or Pro Wrestling USA.... and he shows up here with his past and credentials... and just steps into the ring with the dangerous Takada. I thought the opening stuff set the tone. Backlund rolling out like a real wrestler would in trying to get an ankle pick and Takada having speed and awareness early on to avoid was cool. Every movement meant something. Backlund was really a thinking man's wrestler, being tentative early in locking up and realizing immediately his mistake as he took two kicks. Sold them in that great pissed off Backlund way. When he finally catches leg and gets a takedown it was greatness. The fire and "dance" after his takedown with Bob jumping back up and being like "Come on you fucker" was really great, imo. I enjoyed the early wrestling and counterwrestling and Backlund busting out a rolling abdominal stretch takedown got quite the big pop and confused the striker. Backlund going for judo type throws on Takada and Takada blocking it also brought you back into the "Shit, this is like REAL" stage in watching it. It was a very believable "Pro Wrestling" match I thought. The people were so into everything, which shows that it was a combo of being so conditioned to this style and Backlund's great adaptiveness to it and also, generally knew of Bob's reputation and respected it.

This is seen when Bob countered a series of tough looking knee strikes and picked up Takada...and the fans went nuts...as he had him up in the old finisher "Atomic Spinecrusher" position..but went for a backdrop instead here. Backlund immediately going for a Fujiwara armbar of sorts following that backdrop suplex and the nuclear heat it got was something else. One hell of a near submission. Takada getting a ropebreak was huge.

There is sooo much to love in this match:

- 1) Takada going back to the kicks and staying away from Bob in order to keep with his strategy to strike the wrestler...
- 2) Backlund doing one of the SWEETEST looking side headlock takeover's in trying to transition into a submission toward the end...
- 3) Takada's deep and beautifully applied Fujiwara armbar...how he gets positioning to get the hold and how he shoots in for it was as good as it gets...
- 4) Takada AX KICKING his way brutally out of a Backlund Leglace was such a heated and great moment...
- 5) Backlund putting his hands up and grunting and trying valiantly to swat away the pesky ax kicks

I thought this was the best Backlund match I've ever seen, even better than the Rose and Adonis WWF belt defenses, and he was awesome in this setting I thought. Good shit. Although I didn't like most of the BEST of OTHER JAPAN in 80's stuff.... this was just incredible.

4. Riki Choshu vs Genichiro Tenryu (2/21/85 JPW) [4248 pts] DEAN: Ah you know me. I like this match because they really really really kicked the hell out of each other. Choshu is as big of an asshole as Tenryu and really it's just a blinding level of sweet sweet hate conveyed between two guys who are pretty otherworldly in their toughness. Tenryu lariats Choshu as Joe is checking him for foreign objects and illegal body oils and that's how you wanna start off your wrestling match. See, folks would think that this would get unusually high in the balloting because it's a straight wrestling match in the middle of all that endless shootstyle- but there were plenty of the shootstyle matches that were straight up ass stomps (Nakano/Funaki, Marty Jones/Super Tiger, Backlund/Takada, Maeda/Takada 88, Fujiwara/Everybody), but this is higher in the ballot rankings than those (or most of those- depending on your ballot) because of the suplex off the apron. This is as violent as the best shootstyle ass-stompings in the line-up but it has the extra crazy Tenryu bump to take it over the promised land. Plus Tenryu has the nastiest strikes on the ballot. Plus Choshu's backdrop is the finest transition to offense. Plus Choshu's Scorpion Deathlock is waaaay more fun than the 74 halfcrabs we all suffered through- in terms of time-killing pointless submission hold. You can reverse it, use it nearfalls, go back into it. It is truly the best time-killing submission on the ballot. Plus Tenryu actually sells the Scorpion a thousand times better than anyone sold the halfcrab (with the exception of the Maeda/Takada 88 match). Tenryu's oddly bone-crushing Stuff Suplex to the neck to set up the backwards top rope elbow was pretty great. PLUS the bump to the floor by Tenryu to set-up the ringside brawling and fucking AWESOME Choshu lariat on the floor. Then the Suplex on the apron to the apron to the floor to bring us full circle. Then the postmatch pull apart. Yeah, 4 was a little high, but it's really hard to fight the upside of this match- the heat, the violence, the simple story, the selling, the bumps. Okay, maybe 4 is too low.

5. Yoshiaki Fujiwara vs Super Tiger (7/17/85 UWF) [4215 pts] TOM KARRO-GARSNER: They air ten minutes of a fifteen minute match here but the ten minutes we get is really great. Sayama is wrestling without his mask at this point and really facially resembles Billy Joel and I think my visceral dislike of Billy Joel kind of effects the way I watch all his stuff. I don't know what I'd think watching a Pete Roberts vs. Sayama match. Who do you root for when William F Buckley and Billy Joel get into a fight?

Sayama is pretty much just all stiff kicks in this and doesn't really have any answers for Fujiwara's submissions and this is like the best possible Dick Vrij vs Volk Han match. As this really is a one man Fujiwara show. They do do a couple of Sayama gets crab on Fujiwara spots which get a big pop, and Fujiwara does a couple variations on his signature Santo style headspin escapes. When Fujiwara gets a hold on Sayama, Syama really dives for ropes. But for the most part this match is built on Fujiwara's standing defenses. Fujiwara is all about the defense, trying to catch the leg, catching Sayama in clinches, trying to dodge and feint to avoid kicks, and roll with strikes trying never to get hit cleanly.

The dodging and feinting is really neat visual and something he doesn't do a ton in the other matches. It reminded me a lot of Yosuke Nishijima vs. Mark Hunt. The story that people tell about that match is that it was the equivalent of Takayama vs. Frye where two crazy guys are just exchanging. Not accurate description. Nishijima was a journeyman pro-boxer and he's turning and weaving to avoid taking any punches cleanly while hitting his punches at will. Nishijima is over 50 lbs lighter than Hunt and really had no power behind his punches. So the

story is if Hunt hits a punch cleanly he will hurt Nishijima, but will Hunt gas before he can do that.

Here you had a same dynamic of guy with knock out power vs. guy who is avoiding and turning with the strikes. Of course here Sayama is the smaller guy. So while the Hunt fight kind of exposed Hunt, this match really really puts Sayama over. As its all about Sayama having KO power if he can connect. But Fujiwara for most part is too skilled to allow him to connect. When Fujiwara lets Sayama slip out of a takedown, Sayama is able to stand up quick and nail Fujiwara with a kick to the kidneys and its essentially over. Once Fujiwara starts taking clean hits, he's knocked off his game and less able to defend. The match ends with spectacular knock out where Fujiwara still tries to defend and catches the back of Sayama's ankle on the way down. But at this point he's been hit cleanly too many times and its too late.

6. Masakatsu Funaki vs Tatsuo Nakano (7/24/89 UWF) [4090 pts] DEAN: Tatsuo Nakano is that fat Elvis looking guy from UWF. The DVDVR Lockerroom Match Selection Committee Horror Stories on Nakano was that all 1985 and 1988 UWF cards had at least one Nakano vs Yuko Miyato match would go 30 minutes, 29 minutes or 28 minutes- and they would all be 7 times more life-threateningly horrible than the truly horrible Yuko Miyato vs Minoru Suzuki match that we all collectively kicked our TVs and then fell asleep to. I feel you, my brothers. I cannot imagine how glazed over you must have gotten. The operative word for this match up is "violence". It has a just buckets of hardway blood and just monstrous amounts of ass-stomping. there is more ass stomp here than in the Tenryu/Choshyu match. There is more ass-stomp in this match than in the Maeda/Takada 88 match. There is almost as much ass-stomp as the second Fujiwara/Super Tiger match. What holds it down is the length. What negates the length-problem is the fucking MOLTEN heat as the crowd gets behind the totally out-classed and bloodgushing Nakano. The added extra is that when Masakatsu Funaki is selling all pro style, he sells EXACTLY like Curt Hennig- all big and crazy and flopping about. This is also the modern blueprint for the Takayama run of great matches. Funaki towers over Nakano and wastes little time with matwork- opting instead to dickishly stomp on his smaller prey. The straight headbutts that cause the bleeding is Benoit/Regal-level crazy headbutts with Nakano going completely Tommy Rich in 45 seconds. Nakano makes a fist to the crowd who go fucking ballistic. Funaki's flopping sell of Nakano's first kicks to the head were the UWF equivalent of the Flair Flop. Blood coats the attempt at the Cross-Armbreaker and Funaki's savage assault on the cut to break the hold is AWWWESOME. Fuck a Takayama blueprint, this is FMW main event blueprint. Funaki is Mr Gonneseke and Nakano is a fatter Masato Tanaka. The ref stoppage misses a golden opportunity- the doc is wearing white pants. If this were Mexico or Puerto Rico, you would ENHANCE the bleeding by getting a crimson spray onto the pantleg. God, Funaki is fuckin' channelling Terry Funk when he sells the third knockdown. The final Boston Crab is beautiful in its stretchingness. Weird fucking match. It vaults up the list for it's strangeness and stays there because it so fucking intense.

7. Super Tiger vs Yoshiaki Fujiwara (9/7/84 UWF) [3939 pts] PHIL: This was the opening match of their series, and it was really interesting to watch the different way they approached each other and the style they were working. This was much more of a New Japan style match, then a shootstyle match, although you could see the style starting to evolve. For example while Tiger is

still going for top rope moves, he isn't hitting them. Both times he tries, Fujiwara moves. They still are doing piledrivers, but at least Fujiwara's actually is a counter out of a triangle choke, kind of a incubatory Hughes v. Newton spot.

It wasn't just the style that is different, Fujiwara really controls this match way more then their others. Fujiwara really is a heavyweight against a junior, Tiger's stuff really comes in flurries, while Fujiwara is on top for most of this. They are really great flurries, and Fujiwara is a master at selling a surprise knockdown. Just the way he approaches him, there is none of the tentativeness of later matches, he just walks Tiger down, and counters a lot of his offense. Tiger is the scrappy underdog junior heavyweight which is completely counter to the way he is perceived later, I think this match went a long way in establishing him as a peer to Fujiwara and Maeda, and the finish run of big kicks and the chickenwing, you can tell sort of shocks the crowd.

8. Yoshiaki Fujiwara vs Kazuo Yamazaki (1/7/85 UWF) [3934 pts] PHIL: I had their 1989 match at number one, this was half as long, and I can see why it finished higher, even if I don't agree. This was definitely worked at a faster pace then the 1989 match, and I could see why people would prefer that. This had some holes though, while the 1989 match was pretty perfect. This was great great stuff though. Fujiwara was really amping up the violence at this point of UWF. Compare a Fujiwara match at this point with match ups with out Fujiwara, the brutality is so much more visceral. Like lots of Fujiwara match large parts of this match was worked around ring positioning, with both guys trying to maneuver their opponents into the corner, where they would just unleash. Yamazaki was kicking with full force, and Fujiwara's flops and drooling sells made it even better. Yamazaki curb stomping him in the head was pretty excellent too. Fujiwara when he would get Yamazaki in the corner was unloading with some of the most beautiful punch combinations I have ever see in wrestling. 10 punch combos to the body and the head which would make Marvin Hagler proud. I fought Golden Gloves, and believe me Fujiwara's form was perfect.

While the opening was completely awesome, the match fell apart a bit near the end, some of Fujiwara's mat stuff was great, but some of the mat work dragged a bit. The German suplex by Yamazaki and the piledriver by Fujiwara both felt kind of out of place, and didn't seem to lead to anything. Fujiwara pretty much shrugged off the suplex, and it was kind of shitty and shouldn't have been sold. I did really like the end, with Fujiwara unable to finish Yamazaki with the keylock, and finally just abandoning it and locking on a nasty sleeper, I loved the disdainful walk away too, he looks down at him to say. "Yeah I choked you out, come back when you get some hair on your chest."

9. Yoshiaki Fujiwara vs Super Tiger (9/11/85 UWF) [3808 pts] PHIL: This is the final match up between these two, and really their masterpiece. Kris Zellner described the beginning of this match resembling a heavyweight title fight, and that is really accurate. The first part has a lot of feints and shrugs, Fujiwara throws some jabs, Tiger tosses some range finder kicks but neither guy wants to make the first move. At one point Fujiwara grabs Tiger's wrist and just yanks him in to take him down.

Then you have the Fujiwara controlling Tiger on the mat. The two most trite moves in the first UWF are the half crab and sitting leg lock. Watch some of the lesser matches on this set and

they are loaded with diffident half crabs and somnambulant sitting leg locks, watching Fujiwara work those moves shows the real gulf between him and everyone else. He is constantly moving and working to improve his position, and Tiger is constantly trying to counter. There is never a point in the hold where nothing is happening. After being controlled on the mat, Tiger is able to get a break and unloads a nasty jumping knee right to Fujiwara's face. Fujiwara gets up at nine, backs Tiger into the corner and just blasts him with one of the best straight right hands in wrestling history. And it is on. Most UWF1 matches have a slow build and a hot finish, but this was the best slow build of any of the UWF, and damn near the best hot finish.

The end run of this match was really all about establishing distance. Super Tiger needs to have some distance to unleash his kicks, and when he gets that distance Fujiwara does an amazing job of selling them as deadly, even when they don't land clean. He is drooling, eyes rolling back into his head, checking his tooth to see if it still there, gasping for breath when he gets hit in the belly, Tiger looks like a guy who has the eraser in his feet, he can end a match with one shot. Meanwhile Fujiwara is attempting to keep it close, either on the mat, or in the corners where he can land body shots or headbutts. The finish run is perfect example of that, Tiger gets a couple of near fall KO's, but makes the mistake of locking up with Fujiwara, he tries for a German suplex, but Fujiwara, throws a back elbow, and just drops into a Fujiwara armbar for the tap out. Just an awesome perfect finish for a great match. This is the best of their matches, and is really too low on this list.

10. Yoshiaki Fujiwara vs Kazuo Yamazaki (7/24/89 UWF) [3771 pts] PHIL: This was my number one match, and truly a beautiful piece of professional wrestling. It is paced differently than any of the other matches in the Top 15, and I am guessing the odd pacing may have been a reason it finished low on some peoples balance. Fujiwara, especially in the late 80's and 90's does this really stop-start almost Fugazish pacing, where you have big exchanges or moves, and then lulls, where both guys would circle or feint, before the next attack. I really like this kind of pacing, it is the kind of thing you often see in shootfights or boxing matches, really brings drama to the moments of action.

The first part of this match, Fujiwara is really not taking Yamazaki seriously at all. Like he is almost contemptuous, imagine Flair v. Scott McGhee or Ricky Steamboat in their first match. He throws in a cheap shot headbutt, dancing around mugging, puts on a knee bar while reclining with his head resting leisurely in his hand. At one point Yamazaki throws some kicks which miss, and Fujiwara responds with some really assholeish thrown kicks of his own. Almost like the Jock Football player taunting the Asian kid with fake Karate. Fujiwara has some of the greatest facial expressions in wrestling history, and he really gets across contemptuous prick.

Yamazaki finally gets some respect when he hits Fujiwara with a nasty kick to the stomach for a down. Yamazaki tends to be kind of hit and miss with his kicks, and Fujiwara only sells the ones that land big, unlike a lot of other guys who will sell intent not result. Fujiwara also is always trying to catch the middle kicks, although even when he does, he will sell the shot if it is solid enough.

The last ten minutes of this match really bring it over the top. Fujiwara has gotten four downs on Yamazaki so he just needs one more knockdown for a technical decision. So Yamazaki has his back against the wall. He gets fed up with the abuse and you almost get the sense he has decided to dish out some receipts even if he is going down. Like many Fujiwara matches ring

positioning is very important, Fujiwara had been trapping Yamazaki in the corner and punishing him with bodyshots. Yamazaki kind of bull rushes Fujiwara in the corner, and just unleashes body shots of his own, seemingly aiming right for Fujiwara's sake soaked kidneys. The downs get close to even, and they announce five minutes remaining.

They then go right to the corner with both guys now throwing with abandon and trying to maneuver the other into the corner, Yamazaki gets the final turn and cracks Fujiwara with a knee lift for a nine count. Now UWF2 had booked a ton of 30 minute draws, including one in the opening match of this show. Really the only reason to book so many undercard 30 minute draws is for a main event finish like this.

So we are at 28 minutes and Yamazaki unloads with nasty headbut right to Fujiwara's mouth. Now this is a clearly a receipt for the headbutts earlier in the show. Fujiwara comes up with blood dripping from his mouth, and this look on his face "So were throwing headbutts now, Motherfucker," and he just unloads with three nasty headbutts including one right to the eye for the TKO at 29 minutes 30 seconds. Yamazaki was technically fine here, but this was the Fujiwara show. Just an artist at telling a story with smirks and eye rolls and sneers. Every action had a reaction, great great stuff.

11. Kazuo Yamazaki vs Nobuhiko Takada (8/13/88 UWF) [3762 pts] DEAN: We jockeyed to get out of having to review this match because it is definately one of those matches where you could see (I guess) why folks would like this match and vote it so inexplicably high. Takada is goodlookin' and has really nice skin. Yamazaki is goodlooking in an Ace Frehley Without Makeup kind of way. They are both wearing very nice pants and their boots are very cool. So yeah, I could see why folks would like this- but I could also see why I would have put this at like #43. But we are not here to listen to me be a big baby about why folks picked this over that IWE lucha match with the big fat guy who did that fucking AAAWWWESOME tope and clears out four rows. Yamazaki and Takada are... what... young lions here or something. They respect each other and would hug after every reversal if the UWF would let them. The matwork is like a Lamaze class but they kick each other a couple of times between breathing exercises and positioning. They do get pissed off about a lack of clean breaks. I just watched the Super Tiger-Fujiwara match where Super Tiger drops his entire weight through Fujiwara's skull via his knee while Fujiwara is in fetal position clinging to the ropes, so I can't really back this play 100%. Yamazaki sells the knee well and Takada kicks him there a lot. Takada also does like nine four-minute kneebars and a half hour Half Crab that had the drama and effect of a Sid Eudy chinlock. But the kids in the audience were into it and I was a kid back then so here's to you, little match. The finish was inexplicable but WHITE HOT so that was good. I will stop talking about you now.

12. Super Tiger/Nobuhiko Takada vs Akira Maeda/Yoshiaki Fujiwara (7/23/84 UWF) [3632 pts] PHIL: This is a classic example of a big star tag match. It isn't a shootstyle match (missile dropkicks, top rope headbutts ect), this is your main eventers matching up. Lots of heat, guys getting off their big moves, and setting up your singles matches. The kind of match that would headline a Smackdown PPV. I enjoy stuff like that, although it isn't a match that was particularly high on my list. This was a nice table setter for Takada v. Maeda and Fujiwara v. Super Tiger which are the big two feuds in the early part of UWF 1. I could see this match making me want

to see those singles matches, especially Fujiwara v. Super Tiger. Super Tiger really comes off great here, as it almost feels like he is more over in early UWF1 than he is later. He is also throwing nastier kicks than either Maeda or Takada. Fujiwara is Fujiwara, and he has the charisma that is really needed to pull off this kind of star based match.

13. Kazuo Yamazaki vs Nobuhiko Takada (9/11/85 UWF) [3594 pts] PHIL: When these two were at their best in this set, it really was working young upstart against a strong veteran. Yamazaki working off Fujiwara and Takada working off of Maeda and Backlund were really able to show their strengths and allow the veterans to work off of their fire and selling. Putting them against each other though, really creates the lucha problem of matching up two highfliers. They are both young fiery underdogs, so you get kind of a mirror match, lots of sound and fury signifying nothing.

The opening matwork time killing section of this was pretty dull as UWF1 time killing matwork tended to be. They do a double spill to the floor, and then the last half of the match is pretty much all action. This really was a juniors match in pacing, and had some of the flaws of that style. Both guys doing lots of fancy stuff, for close near falls, but no real build. The stuff at the beginning doesn't lead to the stuff at the end, and neither guy ever really gets an advantage until the match ends.

However I can see why people liked this match more than I did. To be fair to it, the stuff is pretty great stuff. While both guys tended to be hit and miss with their stiffness on this set, they were bringing it here. The kicks thudded, and both guys did a great job both selling the impact of individual moves, and the cumulative effect of the shots. The first big highkick by Yamazaki was a spectacular shot, and the spectacular shots kept coming. Both guys are also really great at coming up at 9, or milking a submission right up to a rope break. The last half of this did have great individual things about it, it just didn't feel like much of a total match to me.

14. Akira Maeda vs Kazuo Yamazaki (5/12/88 UWF) [3571 pts] DEAN: Maeda is more mean and nasty in his matwork in 88 than he was in 85 and it sparks Yamazaki to kick him in the ribs more at dickish moments- thus making this a far more satisfying wrestling experience than their endless, heatless matches from the first UWF. Yamazaki kicks Maeda dead in the face early and he has learned how to break up the monotony of cookie-cutter shootstyle pretty well at this point. Maeda actually conveys a feeling of desperation during the mandatory Half-Crab section. Maeda also throws a pretty beautiful suplex to set up his BUZZKILLER! submission. Yamazaki spits during his half-crab procurement but Maeda cuts it short and knees Yamazaki in the head really hard to make stay interested. Then they lay around for five minutes. I am upbeat. Maeda kicks Yamazaki in the face a few times and they do a bunch of nine counts. So Maeda sinks in a kneelock and they tend to roll around in that for a few minutes. I am upbeat. Yamazaki hits some body shots in the corner and gets a kick in for 8 and then gets some more kicks and they take it back to the mat for some lying around. It's Great Muta vs Great Muta in a matwork clinic! I am upbeat. The finish is pretty funny as they actually blow the finish to a shootstyle match somehow. They flail around and land some nasty kicks to set up Maeda kinda randomly procuring a sleeper. I am upbeat.

15. Atsushi Onita vs Masashi Aoyagi (10/6/89 FMW) [3552 pts] TOM KARRO-GARSNER: This is the main event of your first FMW show and is awesome. FMW at this point really isn't a garbage fed. I'm not sure what exactly it is, but it's not a garbage fed yet. Opening match is a lucharesu jr vs a guy in a mask who kind of wrestles like Ricky Rice and then there are a couple of matches between US wrestlers vs guys in gis, then a fat US women vs. three joshi girls and then there is this main event. This is worked as rounds style MMA v wrestling match. These basically need to follow a simple formula: one guy controls first round, opponent gets to answer in second round and then all hell breaks loose in third. It's simple formula. We watched a lot of these (in UWF and elsewhere) in putting this set of DVDs together and this is really one of the best.

Part of what makes this match so neat is that you have essentially a split crowd. Normally when people talk about Onita, the talking point is that he's extremely charismatic guy who knows how to milk that charisma. Normally in those conversations, people are referring to Onita's work as babyface. Here he really isn't the babyface. Match starts with Aoyagi getting presented with something like 8 flower bouquets from various women and children. Onita gets one bouquet as he watches the other women file past him. Aoyagi gets whole heap of streamers, while Onita gets one diffident one. And the crowd feels like it's mostly made up of Aoyagi supporters, family of students, whatever. If WWF and WCW collapsed in the early nineties I imagine Flair would have spent the last decade working main events against local football coaches (former high school stars now coaching). These would be built around Flair working heel until coach finally gets three point stance and spears Flair. Maybe a more athletic coach would get to string together a shouldertackle, spear and flying tackle. There are large chunks of this match that feel like that fantasy Flair match.

First round is all Onita dominating through cheap shots, while Aoyagi maintains his dignity. Onita attacks before the bell, kicks at students, chokes, hits behind the head, kicks Aoyagi when he's down, etc. Aoyagi does some Dustyish "come on" challenges but really has too much dignity to fight back against the cheap shots and round ends with Onita chucking Aoyagi into his corner post bell.

Second round is all Aoyagi just wasting Onita with kicks and punches, while Onita bails and has to be protected by the ref. Onita gets one string of offense while ref holding Aoyagi back, Onita hits him with (an illegal?) lariat and then dropkicks Aoyagi out of ring, Aoyagi gets back into ring and again wastes Onita working him over like a heavybag. This would be the coach hits his tackles section, Flair would have done the beg off into low blow instead of the ref separating lariat.

Onita and Aoyagi go for the all hell breaks loose third fall. This is worked more give and take than the other rounds. Punches and kicks are exchanged until ref struggles to separate, Onita hits big suplex for Aoyagi to answer with big koppo kick...back and forth. Aoyagi says fuck maintaining my dignity, and spends the third round shrugging off the ref, kicking and punching Onita when he's down, chasing Onita into the crowd when Onita bails, and eventually throwing off the Gi. Aoyagi gets busted open for chasing Onita into the crowd and Onita tries to headbutt Aoyagi out of ring.

Onita lays on the mat between third and fourth round and they run a fourth fall where the towel finally gets thrown in..and you have Aoyagi busted open some more and a giant pull apart where Aoyagi's seconds and Onita's seconds get involved eventually leading Tarzan Goto,

dressed in a cabana shirt and white pants looking like a villain from Wiseguy, to come in and slap Onita for disappointing his dojo. Fucking awesome.

~!~

NOAH 3/4/07

[PHIL SCHNEIDER]

You have to love the internet, you can get an entire NOAH show two days after it happens. Shit you have to wait 4 days for Smackdown.

Yoshinobu Kanemaru/Kentaru Shiga vs Jun Izumida/Makoto Hashi: Nothing particularly memorable. I like the Hashi/IZU team, but Shiga and Kanemaru do nothing for me. NOAH has four wrestlers working the hard head gimmick now? Seems like if JYD is on your card you don't book S.D. Jones too. Hashi breaking out the diving headbutt to the floor is completely insane for two minutes in to a second match meaningless undercard tag. It is such a spectacular spot, he really should be saving it for a big moment of a big match.

Kishin Kawabata/Masao Inoue/Atsushi Aoki vs Go Shiosaki/Tsuyoshi Kikuchi/Tamon Honda: I am a big fan of thrown together NOAH six-man, and while this took a while to get rolling it got pretty great by the end. While the match was all about Go Shiosaki v. Kishin Kawabata, Tamon Honda was in the role of Negro Casas. The match may have not been about him, but he was the guy you wanted to watch. I remember Kawabata was going to the top for a big senton, and out of the corner of your eye you see Honda countering an armbar by powerbombing Aoki on the ring apron, I was thinking "This Kawabata section is cool, but I wish I had picture-in-picture of Tamon Honda during the entire match." Aoki spent a bunch of the match as face in peril, and wasn't really that compelling. He had some cool spots with Honda, but needs to work on his emoting. I did love Masao Inoue's hot tag though, he is all fired up and comes in with forearm eye rakes for everyone. This did get me excited for a Kawabata v. Go singles match, which isn't a Kawabata opponent that would normally excite me.

Bison Smith/Bobby Fish/Chris Hero vs Ricky Marvin/Takeshi Rikio/Akitoshi Saito: Here is another exhibit in the Ricky Marvin as wrestling genius argument. The match is pretty much about his interactions with Bison Smith, and you can see a huge difference between Marvin v. Smith interactions and Smith v. everyone else. You watch Smith wrestle Marvin and you think, wow Smith has gotten really good, and then he has an exchange with Saito and you snort milk at his shittiness. I mean it changes every second. Bobby Fish is the ex Jerk Jackson of Trent Acid ROH dark match fame, and wrestles like a CAW of an indy wrestler, tope con hilo check, fake Low-Ki kick combo check, top rope headbutt check. His moves sometimes look okay, but all of his in between stuff looks really awkward. I suppose for a awkward NOAH gaijin with greasy hair and roid pimples he is shorter than BJ Whitmer. Chris Hero was awesome here, he seems to be working NOVA as a heel taunt. Before every move, he is doing three somersaults.

Rikio is slapping him, and to respond he does a back flip off the top rope. I was loving it, but I don't know whether the Japanese have the context to understand the gimmick, I mean they never saw the SAT's v. Haas Brothers in JAPW.

Akira Taue/Naomichi Marufuji vs Yoshihiro Takayama/Naoki Sano: This was a lot better on paper than in reality. I enjoyed some stuff Sano did, especially his Ringo Mendoza kick to Taue's face. Takayama seemed to be comedy selling for Taue like Taue was Baba, and Marufuji seemed on cruise control. Sano and Misawa have had good matches with each other in the past, so I have no problem with that match up for the GHC. This isn't a match that makes you want to see it though.

Mushking Terry vs Rocky Romero: Terry is Kotaro Suzuki in a Anime costume to appeal to kids. I have no problem normally with wrestling meant to appeal to kids, but this was no Thundercats v. Trio Fantasia. Romero is technically fine but so emotionless and boring. This was basically a DDP match, as Terry comes in with a hurt arm and does a nice job bumping on a tope so he re-injures while eating a Romero tope. Then Romero perfunctorily works the arm for six hours. At one point you can see Hero stifle a yawn at ringside, he had to be thinking "I have two dozen trainees who could work a cartoon villain gimmick, why are they booking Cuban Josh Daniels? This match would be so much better if it had been Darkness Crabtree working the arm." Also why the fuck is Romero doing KENTA spots in NOAH? In a show where KENTA is maineventing? Is he so formulaic that he can't ditch his shitty looking busaki kick for one tour? C.M. Punk wouldn't be stealing KENTA spots if he was working NOAH, he would have the sense to go back to pedigrees, maybe add a stunner.

Doug Williams vs Yoshinari Ogawa: I am kind of torn on this match. On the one hand, they do a ton of cool things here. Ogawa is by far William's best opponent, and you can tell he is a mark for British wrestling and is amped to work that style. The basic story is Ogawa working over the knee and Williams working over the arm. They have a ton of counters, weird holds and great looking bumps to set up the story. Williams ends up kneeing the post while attempting a running knee, and Ogawa takes a nasty shoulder bump into the post. However in a match built around bodypart work Williams doesn't sell at all. I am not talking about a little break in selling, I mean he ignores it. Ogawa spends the entire match on the knee, and Williams breaks the hold and starts running around. It is just too much to ignore. I would have really dug this match a ton without that, but Williams just kills it for me.

Jun Akiyama vs Mohammed Yone: This was a blast, and my favorite match of the show. Yone starts the match by sprinting down the ramp and kicking Akiyama in the head. Akiyama is down for a bit, but when he gets to the ring it is on. Both guys are just throwing blows, and ripping off cool moves. I especially loved the exploder off the apron which Akiyama throws super fast. Really had the feel of a toe to toe short boxing match. Maybe wouldn't win fight of the year, but might win round of the year. At one point Yone kicks Akiyama in the temple and he wrestles the match with a trickle of blood coming down his cheek. Yone is really great at this kind of match, as it kind of felt like a great BattlArts main event.

Misuhara Misawa vs Takeshi Sugihara: I wasn't expecting to like this nearly as much as I did. Sugihara is playing the role of hotshot young guy with all of this fancy offense, and he does have a lot of fancy stuff. Meanwhile Misawa is old fat and washed up and has really started to rule as a fat washed up guy. He sells basically like he irritated, he keeps hiking up his trunks and waving his hand in front of his face like there are flies around. Sugihara is ripping off suplexes and Olympic slams, and Misawa is countering with elbows and backdrops, hell even his Emerald Frosion kind of looks like a bodyslam now. My favorite example of this was Sugihara attempting his big top rope Angle slam, and Misawa countering with a SUPER SIDE HEADLOCK. It ruled, he really should make the side headlock his finisher. The finish was pretty fun too, Sugihara breaks out all this stuff, and Misawa finally just gets fed up and elbows him into unconsciousness. For a guy who throws nothing but elbows now, Misawa has really developed and nice set of elbow variations, back elbows, forearm strikes, one-two combos, point of the elbow shots. I am a Lawler fan, I don't mind a guy who just throws nice looking strikes.

KENTA vs Takeshi Morishima: I remember hearing a story about someone overhearing Christopher Daniels and Scoot Andrews going over a match. Apparently Chris Daniels called it this way "You get all of your stuff in, I'll kick out and then I'll get my stuff in and pin you." This match was worked like it was Chris Daniels v. Scoot Andrews, and that isn't a compliment. This was a 9 minute match, and pretty much both guys got 4 1/2 minutes. KENTA took the first half, ridiculously winning strike exchanges and suplexing Morishima. Then Morishima takes the second half, throws some clotheslines and back suplexes then pins him. Terrible way to work a match like this, it doesn't do anything for Morishima, because he spent the first part of the match totally dominated by a tiny pretty boy, didn't really do a ton for KENTA either as he didn't get big comebacks or anything. I imagine if this was worked like your formula little guy v. big guy match (big guy dominates early, little guy gets some hot comebacks and near falls, but eventually loses), it would have been much better, formulas are formulas for a reason.

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Aussie porn comic zine thing RAVEN MACK wrote...

I'm old school, so sometimes I like to just lay in the bathtub and read something or other and try to talk my wife into scrubbing my back, which she never does because she's got a convoluted post-liberation notion that scrubbing your life partner's back is submissive in some way. So I usually just lay there by myself, reading whatever's come in the mail lately. The other night I was digging into this article in the March 2007 issue of Skin & Ink magazine, that had a long in-depth retelling of Captain Don Leslie's life as a tattooed, sword swallowing, circus freak, who's now dying of mouth cancer and at the end of a long, winding, and colorful life- with all of those adjectives meant literally as well as figuratively. The early part of his life, he had joined the circus and was just working a performers' concession stand, but he had become captivated by watching the sword swallower work, to the point he would sneak it to watch the dude every day, not because it was fake or to figure out the trick or anything like that, but just because it was

such a great thing- to swallow daggers and swords in front of these local bumpkins who had shelled out hard-earned dollars to watch the freak parade.

Eventually, that particular circus's sword swallower taught Capt. Don the work, but this first sword swallower apparently was not so great, as Capt. Don, even though he didn't need to, would feign choking and gagging sounds as he thought that was how it was supposed to be done. A few years later, when being at his own gig, a midget freak watched Capt. Don and was shocked at how amateur his performance was, so told him he'd set up a fellow sword swallowing friend who would be performing nearby to come and check things out. This guy was Alex Linton, who at the time was the Guinness Book of World Records sword swallower. (Ahh..... that childhood dream we all had to get into the Guinness Book for something, whether dribbling a basketball or growing our fingernails or eating a bicycle- it called the inner-carny in all of us.) Linton took to Capt. Don, taught him better techniques, and they developed a friendship that carried on into winter lay-offs from individual performing circuits where they would reconnect in Sarasota, where a lot of freaks wintered, and Linton would tell Capt. Don of great sword swallowers from the circus circuit's past. At the time, Linton was a good thirty-some years the elder to Capt. Don, and he was passing on the stories of these legendary performers who were thirty-some years his own elder- an oral history of people who were near-perfect at something they had dedicated themselves to wholeheartedly, and whom no written word probably had ever been printed over.

This got me to thinking about the concept of the secret oral history and shared secrets involved in carnival-based performances, and how this relates to wrestling, or more specifically, how this relates to my recent conclusion that I don't really care too much for the professional wrestling, itself a carnival-based performance at its root.

Pro wrestling lost the "It's real!" charade, publicly, in the past twenty-five years, but that veil had been ripped away long before that 20/20 expose where John Stossel's little weasel-voiced head got the hearing knocked out of one side of it. (To be fair, John Stossel is just as carnal as any wrestler ever was, pretending he helps and cares in his role as fear-mongering household television journalist, and I guess he deserves credit, because his con will probably far outlast any con the wrestling industry can repackage itself into in the coming decades.) I doubt seriously the people of the late '70s and early '80s thought of a Harley Race or Ric Flair as an athletic parallel to Muhammad Ali or even Larry Holmes. People have known, or at best at least suspected, that wrestling was fake all along for quite some time. But the performance was executed in such a manner that- I don't know, you just wouldn't question it because so much had been put into doing it, I'm not sure what made people just go along. I guess that's what's drawn me to the wrestling all along, the WHY is this happening?

Post-kayfabe-breaking, the wrestling fan in the past decade or so has dwindled in the tangible world, but has thrived online, so that at most wrestling events, you can break the crowd down into two separate forms of retarded people ' one half is physically retarded and probably still has the mental capacity to believe it's real shit going on inside the squared circle, and I guess they help me enjoy the live wrestling experience a bit, because the other half is the social retard, chanting and yelling clever insider quips, and generally tweaking my own nerves a little too much. This is most likely a results of my own egotism, thinking I'm too good to hang out with the internet wrestling nerd who tends to be the type who loves comic books and actually knows the name of theme songs to Jap cartoons.

The internet wrestling nerd accepts the fact that the professional wrestling is not, nor ever was, real in any sense, and tends to take a scientific approach, considering himself (always himself, and usually not a very attractive himself) a student of the pseudo-sport, and often will be heard saying he “needs” to see this obscure match or some Best of So-and-So in Amarillo 1977 triple DVD set, which is nothing more than absolutely every appearance of So-and-So that the dude who put the collection together could find, with no actual attention being paid to what was best or not best, just a gluttonous grand buffet of one freaky slice of the pseudo-sport.

Within the internet-based Wrestling Nerddom, this creates a backlash where others abandon this scientific attitude and become the ironic lovers of the more strange and stupid gimmicks like Umaga or The Boogeyman, simply because it falls outside of the realm of science, and causes these contrarians great glee to have the analysis-based nerds struggle to explain something.

And with me being, unfortunately, a denizen of the Wrestling Nerddom myself

(www.deathvalleydriver.com), I have at times complained about how shitty the wrestling now is compared to whatever it was when I used to still see whatever it was I saw in it. I’ve never really been able to figure out why this was, because it wasn’t as simple as people still pretended it was real, though the easy admission of it not being real combat certainly did add a homoerotic bad taste to sitting around watching sweaty men grapple with each other. But while reading the piece about Captain Don Leslie, I realized that what it is that made me love wrestling, and why I probably hate it now, is not the real or fake, or how it’s done, but the WHY was this happening? And this applies to whether it be pro wrestling or slight-of-hand magician or a sword swallower at the freak show. WHY were these things happening? Why would people pretend to swallow a sword to make a bunch of local bumpkins “ooh” and “ahh” for fifty cents a head? Why would two big guys actually beat each other in a simulated athletic competition, and why would all these other people sitting ringside be so captivated by it? Why was all this happening?

This got me to thinking further about the freak show, featuring sword swallowers and bearded ladies and strong midgets and the such, which would have been run by a promoter. I am assuming the freaks made a decent enough living for being freaky, but I doubt any of them were living high on the hog at all. It was scraps of money- nothing great- but you got to travel around and look at a bunch of weird-looking people be shocked or awed by what you did. And the dude who made the real money off this was the promoter or circus-owner or whoever was running the whole set-up. And it seems the performers were drawn in with a cult-like religious aspect to what they were doing- complete with the passing of inner-secrets and traditions, to make one feel like they were a part of something small and select. And reading about Capt. Don talk of hearing thirty-five years ago from Alex Linton about great sword swallowers from thirty-five years before that- and all this happening outside of earshot of anybody else who need not know these things, that all added to the Why. It allowed a performer like Capt. Don to completely believe in what he was doing, even if what he was doing may not have been what it was perceived to be exactly.

This is not to suggest all carnival-based performances are faked, but just that when you add history and cult religion undertones to the performer’s mind, it becomes far more than just what he is doing on the stage, which separated jobs like this from just being a Starbucks or Kinko’s employee or someone sitting in a cubicle shuffling numbers back and forth. One was there to make the bumpkins believe in what was happening, or at least if they didn’t believe it, do it in such grand and well-executed fashion that they dare not ask if it wasn’t really what it looked like, because you’d be insulting the freak carny wrestler midget dagger eater by doing so.

And I would think it's safe to say that with the professional wrestling being well-established cable TV programming and not something set up in a tent in a field on the outskirts of town, it's far more of a regular business now than it would've been when closer to its circus roots. But even up into the '80s, before 20/20 feigning newsworthiness, wrestling's traditions were carried on in the same way. Wrestlers heard stories from others and learned the subtle details- how to say this or that to an old lady in the front row or how to fall flat on your face on concrete directly in front of little kids- and the old-timers passed these lessons, and these legends of previous purveyors of this secret art, onto the next generation. Some people learned from really shitty old wrestlers (like Capt. Don's first sword swallowing teacher), and some learned from better ones. Sometimes the guy who looked great in the ring was barely coherent when it came to teaching anyone else what must have just come naturally to him. And sometimes a guy who never did much more than work a three-town circuit for ten years might've been the best at laying out the subtle nuances of that little circuit. And the promoters promoted it all to the public, while promoting the special cult-like secret of it all to the wrestlers, to pull them into the religion of the wrestler. Thus, the promoter could make his money off both ends of the bargain- public and wrestlers- to varying degrees, but everyone went home happy at the end of the day. (And who gives a fuck about the end of the life? You have a good run riding the roads and get some ass and scars and great stories out of it, in my opinion, you're better off than having a padded bank account.)

But we're twenty-five years removed from this line of thinking, as if it being real or fake was the entire point of it all ' the answer to Why ' and it's moved to more of just a merchandising machine, with indie promotions not as concerned about live audiences as they are with DVD sales. I think this misses the whole Why, which like I said, is probably unexplainable, and that frustrates peoples. The unexplained is why we have religion and science, to keep our little minds from fretting over things like this. But still, twenty-five years removed, wrestlers are far more casual about chatting with internet fans on how things are laid out, and pretty much anyone can pay a wad of money to a plethora of wrestlers with varying degrees of personal success to "live their dream" and be trained to be a wrestler or referee on a smaller level. And this has created more and more wrestlers who know it's fake and never feel the need to ever pretend otherwise too hard, which is fine I guess, but they go through the motions of a wrestling match and try to make it look beautiful to the filter of an analytical mind, turning it to science, abandoning the Why.

This reminds me of this dude who is friends of friends- Penn Rollins- who's some sort of celebrated minor figure as a "seminal member" of math rock (prog punk?) bands from years ago. For Rollins, playing guitar has little to do with feeling or spirit; it's just points on the guitar that he's assigned numbers to so he'll learn a riff, memorize the numerical sequences to put these together, and then proceed to follow the sequence on his guitar neck, to a tee. It allows him the ability to add different mathematical sequences that might seem odd or intriguing to the average musical ear, but there's no magic or muse involved in the process whatsoever- all pure analysis. And to the analytical mind, it sounds awesome and seems like dude is the greatest guitar player who never got known on a large scale.

This is the wrestler of today- numbers in a sequence strung together so that analysis will find it to be highly acceptable.

And that's how I realized why I hate wrestling now when I used to love it, because there is no more Why to it anymore. What is happening is far too obvious, and it doesn't matter how hard two guys actually hit each other in the jaw or kick each other in the back, it's still all too obvious. And that makes it look fuckin' stupid.

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PHIL SCHNEIDER'S ON-GOING TOP 20 of 2006

Here is the current list, reviews for the older matches are in previous DVDVR's

1. Chris Benoit vs Finlay WWE 5/21
2. Jun Akiyama vs Masao Inoue NOAH 4/23
3. Negro Navarro/Villano 4/Villano 5 v. Dos Caras Jr./Heavy Metal/Solar 1 AULL 11/2
4. Rey Mysterio vs Randy Orton WWE 4/4
5. Chris Benoit v. William Regal WWE 10/8
6. Necro Butcher v. Super Dragon PWG 9/2
7. American Dragon Brian Danielson/Samoa Joe/B.J. Whitmer/Adam Pearce/Ace Steele/Homicide v. Nate Webb/Chris Hero/Claudio Castagnoli/Necro Butcher/Eddie Kingston ROH 7/15
8. KENTA vs American Dragon Bryan Danielson
9. William Regal vs Chris Benoit
10. Briscoes vs Austin Aries/Roderick Strong ROH 8/12
11. Chris Benoit vs Finlay WWE 5/3
12. Finlay vs Rey Mysterio WWE 3/20
13. Chris Benoit vs JBL WWE 4/11
14. American Dragon Brian Danielson vs Nigel McGuinness ROH 8/12
15. Meiko Satomura vs Kyoko Kimura Sendai 12/3
16. Homicide vs Necro Butcher 5/13
17. Chris Benoit vs William Regal WWE 5/8
18. KENTA v. Matt Sydal ROH 11/4
19. American Dragon Brian Danielson vs Samoa Joe ROH 8/6
20. Ric Flair vs Mick Foley- WWE 8/20

Previously on the list

- El Hijo Del Santo vs Perro Aguayo Jr. 8/25
- American Dragon Brian Danielson vs Nigel McGuinness ROH 4/29
- Mistico/Negro Casas vs Averno/Memphisto CMLL 4/15
- Chris Hero/Necro Butcher/Super Dragon v. Samoa Joe/B.J. Whitmer/Adam Pearce ROH 4/22
- La Mascara/El Hijo Del Santo v. Blue Panther/Tarzan Boy CMLL GDL 1/1
- Rey Mysterio v. Mark Henry WWE 1/15
- Damien Wayne v. Sean Denny NWA-VA 5/6
- Meiko Satomura v. Aja Kong Sendai Pro Wrestling 7/9

- L.A. Park/Marco Corleone/Johnny Stamboli v. Dr. Wagner Jr./Dos Caras Jr./Lizmark Jr. CMLL 5/19
- Sadico v. Terry 2000 AULL 9/13
- Rey Mysterio v. Finlay 9/5
- Yuki Ishikawa v. Hiroyuki Ito Big Mouth Loud 5/4
- El Hijo Del Santo/Negro Casas/Mistico v. Atlantis/Black Warrior/Ultimo Guerrerro 8/4
- Low-Ki v. Necro Butcher IWA-MS 4/1
- Rey Mysterio/Bobby Lashley/Chris Benoit v. JBL/Finlay/Randy Orton WWE 2/23
- Samoa Joe v. Necro Butcher IWA-MS 1/12
- Minoru Suzuki vs. Yoshiaki Fujiwara Big Mouth Loud 3/22
- Juventud v. Kid Kash WWE 1/3
- A.J. Styles v. Matt Sydal ROH 1/14
- Samoa Joe v. BJ Whitmer ROH 1/14
- Chris Benoit v. Randy Orton WWE 1/24
- Shadow WX/Mammoth Sasaki v. Abdullah Kobayashi/Daisuke Sekimoto BJW 1/27/06
- Finlay v. Chris Benoit WWE 1/30
- HHH v. Big Show WWE 2/13
- Finlay/JBL v. Lashley/Chris Benoit WWE 2/16
- KENTA/Takeshi Morishima/Mohammed Yone v. Kenta Kobashi/Yoshinobu Kanemaru/Tamon Honda NOAH 2/17
- Undertaker v. Kurt Angle WWE 2/19
- KUDO & MIKAMI v. Yoshiaki Yago & MIYAWAKI Chikara 2/24
- Milano Collection AT/Skyde v. Claudio Castagnoli/ Chris Hero Chikara 2/26
- Finlay v. Bobby Lashley WWE 5/8

15. Meiko Satomura vs Kyoko Kimura Sendai 12/3: Joshi is pretty much a dead artform at this point. There are a couple of promotions still running tiny shows, and there are some dedicated perverts who still focus on the scraps. Luckily some of those perverts upload matches, and so I can catch Meiko Satomura singles matches. Satomura was one of my favorites back in the days when GAEA was the third best promotion in the world, and she still is amazing at your main event wrestling. I had never seen Kimura before, she is a Big Japan worker with a wacky racist Rastafarian gimmick, and a huge afro. She has really nice headbutts, which is important, if you are going to be a minstrel, be a minstrel.

This was a basically worked main event, with both women doing a bunch of really cool armwork, and cool arm selling. There is a section where they exchange armbreakers (the over the shoulder move, that usually sets up a MX comedy spot), Meiko's armbreakers are the best I have ever seen, she actually looks like she is breaking Kimura's arm. Kimura did a bunch of nice near falls based around an Octopus hold, including grounding it into almost a crossarmbreaker. After they did all of the duel armwork, they did an elbow exchange, but it came off less like no-selling and more like Arturo Gatti gutting it out and throwing the broken right hand. Often I find myself watching current Japanese wrestling with a "just wait" approach. I am really liking this, but just wait, "Man is this Kaz v. Kondo match good, wait did he just go

back on offense 20 seconds after a top rope piledriver...man fuck this match." So as much as I enjoyed this, I was waiting for it to fall apart, but it never did, there never was a "fuck this" moment. It was really great, then it ended.

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WRESTLE LAND- 10/8/2007
[DEAN RASMUSSEN]

Australian patriot, wrestling fan, young fella and all around good egg- Stuart- uploaded this and we are as always forever in his debt. I love the Wrestle Land.

Ryusuke Taguchi vs Milano Collection AT: I'm a busy guy so I haven't really been following all the Ultimo Dragon trainees like in the old days when you Crazy Max and it only seemed slightly latently homosexual. I haven't been following the Milano Collection AT like a good wrestling internet denizen should I guess- but come on, there's all kinds of wrestling to watch. Taguchi has a bad perm and he is first to the ring. MCAT has the hot ladies with him and it makes him look either all continental and classy OR he is hording all the Dragon Gate faghags for himself. I am not here to judge. I am here to watch the wrestlings. They both dance a bit before procuring a headlock working segment. Taguchi is not nearly the good-lookin' motherfucker that Milano is- but hell, who is? they do a really long headlock segment. MCAT goes like two minutes without breaking it, making this Tom K's favorite Wrestle Land match so far, one could assume. The story is Taguchi as feisty young upstart and MCAT as the wrestler in his prime- all compressed into a Nitro match. So they hit the finishers early- MCAT going complete Cerebro submission freakout before BUMPING HIS WAY INTO MY HEART and then kicking Taguchi in the head over the rope to make Taguchi sprawl to the floor TO BUMP HIS WAY INTO MY HEART. The roll-up sequence is really fucking cool, with Taguchi bridging under a crescent reverse savat kick and looking fuckin SHARP on his desperation roll-ups. That's good wrestlin'. I enjoy these two guys despite my studly, macho, manly preconceived notions of what I will like.

MINORU/ Jado/ Gedo vs TARU/ Shuji Kondo/ "brother" YASSHI: Gedo gained some weight so I no longer have to worry about him. I don't know who Nana Natsuma is, but the Voodoo Murders broke Minoru's dvd and he is distraught. I went and looked it up and being despondent over losing your finest porn dvd is so Japanese that I cannot even begin to comprehend. I would assume that Gedo and Jado would have something on their hard drives soothing to Minoru's lust-filled soul- but I doubt anyone on earth would ever want to brave the Land of Gedo and Jado's Hard Drives. TARU looks like he 80 years old- a veritable Patches O'Hoolihan for the Voodoo Murders. He still bumps perfectly fine so looks can be deceiving. Shuji Kondo is still the most roided out wrestler still alive. They all brawl all over the place then bring it back to have a regular six man with Minoru taking big bumps into the chairs and leaning into TARU's kicks like it's 1998 all over again. TARU gives Minoru punches in the face in the headlock while Gedo and Jado get the crowd into Minoru's babyface comeback. And that's something to love about Wrestle Land. Minoru is fired up in his hope spot and sells the cutting off of all hope by the powerslam of Shuji and the heel into the groin by TARU. Minoru finally makes the fairly hot tag and Jado clotheslines everyone and then double clotheslines everyone. This is soooooo NJ

WCWSN. Jado suplexes the fudge out Shuji before Shuji uses his ICo-Pro based power offense finally slow down the Jado juggernaut. Minoru and Yasshi have a flippy, jumpy sequence with Yasshi driving business end of his Burning Man long short paunts directly into the mug of Minoru. Minoru barely recovers from the influx of pechooli and cooter remnant odors to kick out. But he does. Minoru catches him on the toprope and Superplexes Yasshi to set up a very fine ref bump to allow everyone grab a weapon and force a no contest. Minoru is slowly working his way back me, with a burning love inside. Postmatch, TARU talks about the old days playing bass for a Loudness tribute band or something. Minoru pledges revenge on the dvd and the hours of... masturbatory pleasure it gave him? Japan. Jesus.

Manabu Nakanishi/ Super Strong Machine/ Michiyoshi Ohara vs Big Van Vader/ Makai #11/ Makai #14: What the fuck, it's VADER!!! Ohara and SSM. And Manabooooo! Vader looks about like he always does except he is wearing the boss Vader in Mexico mask that wore in that match everyone has seen from the 80s. Vader still looks like Vader when the match starts too- going up for the bodyslam and being a big stiff working fat man. I'm not sure who the Makai's are in this- but really they and Ohara and SSM are there to kill time until Vader can rest up enough to get back int he ring with Nakanishi- a brilliant bit of booking actually. These four have a perfectly fine Southern Posse vs Cruel Connection I and II match and then they tag in Vader and Manabu. Wrestle Land is fucking awesome. Vader is still pretty fucking awesome in his spurts in this match. Vader just lays in his stuff and Nakanishi is man enough to lean into all of it. God, Vader is 900 years old and STILL does the over the top rope bump to the floor. Manabu then pins a random Makai and we all await a singles match that appears to have never happened. This was fun. Postmatch, Nakanishi stomps on the Wrestle Land insignia and the crowd rocks out to his crazy beat.

Elimination Match: Manabu Nakanishi/ Tanaka/ Jado/ Gedo/ Ryusuke Taguchi vs Toru Yano/ Milano Collection AT/ Makai Masked Canadian/ Makai #11/ TARU: VOODOO MURDERS cut Tanahashi's hair and they might as well have tried to fuck his dog! IT IS ON! OR! They could have a quick elimination match. TARU is in it so they cheat like motherfuckers. Minoru does a fucking BEAUTIFUL Tope Con Hilo and eliminates himself. MCAT mauls Gedo and he is really growing on me. Toru Yano rounds out the cast by being the the palest man in professional wrestling. Taguchi is the last remaining on his team and gets the full brunt of TARU and Makai #11, thus allowing Taguchi to show his tenacity and grit. THEN! Tanahashi storms out beats the dogshit out of TARU and Taguchi eliminates TARU to set up Taguchi versus #11 and Taguchi gets the win. Who books this? It's really fun. I mean really. It's WCWSN but without the Tony Schivonne shit to suffer through.

Jillion stars.

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Phil's Ongoing 2007 MOTY List

1. John Cena v. Umaga WWE 1/28

2. MNM v. Hardy Boyz WWE 1/28
 3. Briscoes v. Ricky Marvin/Kontaro Suzuki NOAH 1/21
 4. Shinjiro Ohtani/Takao Omori/Kazunari Murakami v. Kohei Sato/Hirofuka Yokoi/Yoshiro Takayama Zero 1 1/19
 5. Chris Benoit v. Chavo Guerrero WWE 1/16
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1. John Cena vs Umaga 1/28: I have read a lot of people really putting over Umaga after this match, and he was spectacular, but this was a Cena show. Cena has always been really great at selling a beating, and with Helmsley hurt and Michaels in a Royal Rumble your top face actually gets to use all the shortcuts and gimmicks that WWE main event matches kind of need. For Cena's run the top face has had to work all these bloodless main events, while your undercard faces do all the bleeding. It would be like Mike Graham hitting an Orange Bowl gusher while Dusty goes dry. They have done a really nice job establishing all of this over Umaga offense, and unlike a Michaels match Cena wasn't eating all of it and kicking out at two, he was avoiding all of the big shots. Really got over the story of Cena surviving rather than winning. Cena was really spectacular here. His selling was as good as anyone in wrestling, the early ribs selling, the constant fatigue selling, his Backlund style strength selling. You actually buy that those aluminum steps weigh as much as they say they do. The final shot of Cena screaming at Umaga to die as blood was streaming down his face was a great wrestling visual.

2. MNM vs Hardy Boyz WWE 1/28: Back in the late 90's I used to take road trips down to North Carolina to watch the Hardy's work great Southern tag matches. In the WWE they had really made their name with spotfests, but this was a throwback to Southern Pines. MNM are no Death and Destruction, but Johnny Nitro is really the world's best Christian York. I really dug all of the work on Matt's jaw, and Jeff's ribs, and Nitro countering of the springboard into a Oklahoma roll was jump out of your seat awesome. Just a classic match formula done really well.

3. Briscoes vs Ricky Marvin/Kotaro Suzuki 1/21: Not a great total match, but had enough completely crazy fun stuff to make up for the awkward parts. Suzuki has improved from awful to tolerable, but isn't very good as Ricky Morton getting beaten on and kicking out at two, his dyed blond eyebrows really creeped me out too, doesn't really feel like a face look. The Briscoes had an awkward moment or two, but were mostly total asskickers. Super height on the dropkicks, really great stomps and fistdrops, and some crazy sequences. Mark's stage dive senton over the ringpost was one of the swankier dives I have seen in a long time, nothing fancy, but it looked crazy and landed hard. Ricky Marvin was the king here though, taking everything high in the air and hard on his head, setting up some intricate crazy sequences, and looking like one of the best wrestlers in the world. Last ten minutes were as good a ten minute Briscoe spotfest finish as you are going to see, and at no point did it feel like it went to long. Fun, fun stuff.

4. Shinjiro Ohtani/Takao Omori/Kazunari Murakami vs Kohei Sato/Hirofuka Yokoi/Yoshiro Takayama Zero 1 1/19: Man is it great to see Takayama back, he was a total blast here, punching people in the face, kneeing people in the head, bleeding, and mugging like no one's business. This match really had some of the great muggers in wrestling right now, and was filled

with awesome facial expressions. Murakami has been pretty lackluster in the last year or so, but he was great here, as Yokoi got in his face and they squared off with lots of jukes, jabs and sneers. The Sato v. Murakami mat sections were pretty great too, as I had no idea Murakami could U-Style it out like that. I have never been a huge Omori fan, but I hope we get an epic singles match out of the No Fear break up, as he looked as good as I have ever seen him in his face off with Takayama.

5. Chris Benoit vs Chavo Guerrero WWE 1/16: Chavo gets a lot of shit for some reason, the Vicki stuff is bad, but he is still one of the best wrestlers in the world. This was another really good Chavo Guerrero street fight, with him ripping up Benoit's arm, and Benoit doing a great job selling it. The armbreaker using the chair was pretty awesome looking, as was the continued suplexes on the chair and belt. This could have used some blood, and wasn't as good as the Rey I Quit match, but was brutal looking and really fun.

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5 HIDDEN GEMS

[PHIL SCHNEIDER, TOM KARRO-GARSNER]

Riki Choshu vs Yoshiaki Fujiwara New Japan 6/9/87

PAS: Pretty much a textbook example of a simple match performed by ridiculously charismatic performers, and how great something like that can be. Very few wrestling moves performed by either guy. Fujiwara does basically headbutts, punches and a Fujiwara arm bar. Choshu does kicks, one back suplex, a scorpion deathlock and Choshu lariats. It isn't about what they do, it is how and when they do it. Fujiwara jumps Choshu in the aisle and just destroys him for the opening five minutes. Choshu is bleeding and Fujiwara is smirking and strutting, Choshu gets control with a back suplex, and Fujiwara has an awesome "Oh Fuck" look on his face as he goes up. It gets a little more back and forth after that, but Fujiwara still controls most of it, until he makes the mistake of getting cocky and removing the ringpad. Choshu reverses the whip, Fujiwara takes a bump, they spill to the outside, and Choshu just smashes Fujiwara's head into the ringpost. Fujiwara has a traditional comedy spot, where he no-sells getting his head smashed into the ringpost, so Choshu really has to crack open his skull to make it work. Then it is all about a repulsively bloody Fujiwara trying to survive incredible looking Choshu lariats. Both guys come off as such superstars, it was like watching Hogan v. Rock with actually contact being made on the moves.

TKG: So Fujiwara attacks Choshu in the aisle busts him open and beats on him, and beats on him, and beats on him...and there is no comeback and it almost had a lucha fall feel as just completely one sided but you can tell everything by reading both guys eyes. Phil mentions Fujiwara's facial expressions and I don't care how long one studies mime with Decroux...Fujiwara can communicate more with a wrinkle of his nose. There is this point where Choshu is punching Fujiwara in the corner and Fujiwara goes from anger at being in the corner, to defiance, to struggling to maintain the defiance, to just a fuck you face that would make Murakami cower. The first lariat that Choshu hits Fujiwara with is just an absolute blast..like getting run over by a truck. the second and third ones are less impressive lariats but Fujiwara

has these really awesome ways of selling/taking them. I mean they are still impressive lariats but its more about Fujiwara going into a flamingo stance and the flipping downward in what really looks like a boxer getting KOed and moving legs involuntarily on fall kind of deal. The lariat take that ends the match, I can't even come up with a way to describe it.

Original Midnight Express vs Jerry Lawler/Bill Dundee AWA 10/30/87

PAS: This is for the AWA tag belts and is a match which on paper looks really awesome, but especially in the 80's on paper matches were often pretty disappointing. This however was even better then it looked on paper. Lawler and Dundee are a great tag team, we all know what great individual wrestlers they are, and how well they match up against each other, but they also have great face tag team shtick. Their opening babyface in control section was just full of great stuff. I especially loved the variations on the partner blocks the Irish whip into the corner, also this was a punch marks dream match with both Lawler and Dundee breaking out tons of different combos. I especially loved the running left hook by Dundee. OMX were a lot fun in this too, especially Randy Rose who looked Eaton great in this, he takes a huge high backdrop, and has a bunch of fun offense. Slim Paul E. with his sport coat with rolled up sleeves throws in the phone and the OMX win the belts. I liked this more then any of the Rose/Somers v. Midnight Rockers matches and this was fucking with the high end Rock and Rolls v. Midnights matches.

TKG: Man this was fun. A lot of faces do stuff effectively, heels try same spots only to have the backfire. If you've seen the Memphis doc on youtube, you may remember the Hector Guerrero vs. Lawler spot where Hector puts Lawler across top rope and then kicks at him...Lawler tries same spot and Hector gets out of way. Lawler does same spot with Rose but with Lawler working face this time out. Lawler is caught with knee in corner and ends up face in peril eating a punch with a big bump to floor and then taking body slam on the floor running powerslam from Rose, etc. Dundee is all over the place as guy on apron...running after Heyman on the floor. Holding back heel from making tag while waiting for Lawler's attempt to make hot tag etc. But really this match is about the early face in control section with the two faces just laying in punches and clotheslines..with Randy Rose just running head first into the fists and lariats. Dundee does a top rope knee drop with refs back turned. I don't know what the top rope rule was at the time but ref turns around and really can't figure out what's going on as Lawler and Dundee switch off going for two counts on Rose before ref can figure out who is the legal man. I don't know if it was a stunt granny but there is also a nun in the front row who punches at the air with every face punch and gets absolutely irate at all the heel cheating.

El Hijo Del Santo vs Brazo De Oro UWA 1/13/91

PAS: This is a mask v. hair match, and is two guys working an amazing match in their secondary specialties. Santo is primarily known for classic lucha, either technical singles matches or formula trios match, the Brazos are primarily known as comedy wrestlers. However both guys are amazing brawlers, and this is a bloody violent amazing brawl. Oro has such force on everything he does, headbutts, kicks, stomps, he comes off as a total asskicker. He dominates the first round, busting open Santo so you can see a pulsating blood stain on the Silver mask. Santo comes back and hits his brawling flying moves, he is the best at making

topes look like vicious attacks. Oro isn't about to be out bled and by the end of the match has a sickening amount of blood squirting out of his head.

TKG: Santo is a guy who works really great singles matches. I've written a bunch of times about the difference between how luchadors work a title match and how they work a hair/mask match. Both very different styles/genres of matches and both genres that Santo really is master of. And on some level here you have a formula Santo hair/mask match where they meet all the genre conventions/requirements that you need to get that off. This is of course not just any Hair/Mask match its a Hijo del Santo hair/mask match which means really the finish is never in any doubt...nonetheless the two guys need to work up to a level where you loose track of that. There is normally an inherent drama in a hair/mask match that is going to be missing when you have a Santo hair/mask match. Instead the drama is about the guy who you know is going to loose having to make an actual fight out of it, so not just a hair/mask match its kind of hair/mask match with undercurrent of lower ranked guy challenging Jumbo or somesuch. And motherfuck does Brazo del Oro just step up to the plate. Oro isn't just an absolute bad ass in the opening fall which he dominates but he really comes off as guy fighting for the fall in the second Santo fall too.

Wayne Shamrock vs Naoki Sano PWFG 5/19/91

PAS: I was pretty much in shock during this match, I couldn't believe what I was watching. I have never particularly cared for a thing Ken Shamrock has ever done, so I expected nothing out of this match, and it turned out to be as good as anything on the 80's Other Japan set. So much to love about this match, as they pretty much went back and forth from spectacular mat exchanges into awesome slugfest strike exchanges, great takedowns, into more spectacular mat exchanges.

The pacing of this was great, I especially loved how they paced their mat highspots. One guy would get in position and struggle a bit, and then there would be a lull, and then super fast move into a choke or a kneebar. The crowd would pop huge for all of the mat spots, and it was the pacing of them which would really do it. Then after the mat near falls they would stand and just lay into each other with big shots, Shamrock's strikes looked way better here then in the previous match, and Sano was drilling him too. This was before Sano went to UWFI so I would guess this was his first shootstyle match ever, and he was a master of it. This was Sano's match, and while Shamrock was game, you could tell Sano was leading him. I also loved how Sano mixed in pro moves, as I actually bought an STF as a shoot submission, and a DDT as a shoot throw.

TKG: Shamrock comes into this with preposterous Saturday Night Fever hair. He's one headband away from being the Dingo Warrior. This had a ton of crowd heat and first half is really made by that crowd heat. Phil covers really the early pacing of this as its two guys jockeying for position, conservatively moving toward a big move...moving moving...then they hit it and crowd pops. Both guys are conservative. They don't want to leave anything open for opponent. So its all about fight for position.

As the match goes on you get the sense that both guys get more desperate. Shamrock throws his hands more often and all the big moves go from being hit cleanly to being almost video game style "make or miss" moves. So first half of the match is all about guys getting into position for throws or submissions and then hitting them cleanly, second half is about their health power bars wearing down and so they struggle to get into position for stuff and then can't hit it cleanly. Shamrock moves into position to hook Sano's legs with leg scissors and can't do it...opening himself up for Sano. Sano moves into position for throws but can no longer deal with Shamrock's weight advantage and so can't hit the throws cleanly...leaving himself open for Shamrock.

It's not the traditional body of match/finish of match split. It's two conservative fighters sticking to their gameplan with the fight taking its toll. It's that layout that really made this for me. Well that and the shoot DDT

Genericho Tenryu vs Yoshiaki Yatsu- SUPER WORLD SPORT- 10/29/91

TKG: So Phil gets this SWS card with a disappointing Orient Express vs. Sano/Orihara match, disappointing Haku/Nakano vs. somebody and Fuyuki, disappointing Takano v. Barbarian, Bestia carrying Asai to a nice juniors match, and I guess a the Hara vs. Warlord match which exceeded expectations. And then there was the main event. And Fuck I need to see every time these two guys match up. What did Tenryu do to Yatsu to deserve this? What did Yatsu do to Tenryu? What in hell are these two guys doing to each other. This starts with Yatsu slapping the dogshit out of Tenryu's ear, and then Yatsu just looks to be going after the ear, forearm right to the ear, stiff enziguri right to ear, etc. It's like he wants to bust his eardrum. Yatsu is sick of the women being drawn to Tenryu on the dance floor and has decided to fuck Tenryu's balance up permanently. Tenryu crawls around the ring and sells. Damn it bitch it's my jherri curl that draws the women not my dance steps you ugly fuck. Tenryu chops the fuck out of Yatsu chops him right on the throat, enziguri's him in the back of the head, etc. But this is really the Yatsu show as he goes on these huge runs of offense were you legit believe that Tenryu is concussed or at least been rendered near immobile. I think my favorite spot is the first rope flying battering ram headbutt that Yatsu throws. He follows this up with just a really nasty Terry Taylor type chinbreaker except he executes it with this kind of complete disregard. Like Steve Williams throwing a dangerous suplex, except it's a chinbreaker. Chinbreaker 91~!

PAS: Yatsu had all the really great offense in this match, Tom didn't even mention the bulldog on the floor or the running shoulder block off the apron, but Tenryu was bringing some sick violence to the show. Laying in the Kawada kicks right to Yatsu's eye and face, there was a section where Tenryu kicks him directly in the kidney and Yatsu kind of rolls on the mat clutching it in pain. Then Tenryu just starts kneeing and punching him right on the kidney, and you get the sense if Tenryu lost his equilibrium after this match, Yatsu wasn't able to drink coffee or liquor ever again. I think there were multiple parts in this match where you figured they would have to stop the match and get a doctor. I thought Tenryu was concussed by an early Yatsu lariet, thought Yatsu had lacerated his spleen. Just an epic amazing shockingly violent train wreck of a classic match.

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I even think you hate me when you call me on the phone
And sometimes when we go out I wish I'd stayed at home
SINGLE GOING STEADY
And when I'm dreaming or just lying in my bed
I think you've got it in for me
Is it all in my head is it in my head
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%^%^%^%^%^%^%^%^ Toshiaki Kawada vs Osamu Nishimura- MUGA- 1/28/2007-
[DEAN RASMUSSEN]: It's Friday afternoon, I'm 40 years old and I'm listening to "Green Grass
and Hightides Forever" by the Outlaws. The Outlaws was more a band for my older brother but
when you get my age it all kinda blends into one giant dull thud of memory. I remember some
music, fucking some people, things seeming important, things that got me excited about the
future- the usual youthful exuberence bullshit. It all let's you down. Going out and STAKING
YOUR CLAIM AND BEING YOUR OWN MAN! It's complete bullshit. You have one kid and you
realize what's important in your little life and it ain't your own little selfish life. THE MUSIC
MAAAAN! It's all about the KIDS AND OUR MUSSICC MAAAN! That's complete bullshit. I'm
listening to the Outlaws right now and I saw Husker Du TWICE and pretended to like the First
Wave Of Industrial Noise when attending parties in 1985. After a while, you settle into a life
rhythm. You figure out what is important: children, love, truth. One of the minor things you have
to figure out is your Hustle. My job in life is to research underground utility damages and figure
out how to present it to the state of Virginia to see if we are eligible to be fined. I think it's a good
job. It's far more than I figured I'd end up doing. Your Hustle is a whole different story. Your
Hustle is what you do for yourself to impact the world and thus self-realize! SELF-REALIZE! I.
REVIEW. WRESTLING. ON. THE. INTERNET. And being a thousand, and having reviewed a
preposterous amount of wrestling in the last ten years, I can say that I'm pretty fucking stoked
about the Kawada- Nishimura British rules match. So let's go.
GODDAM, the Kawada KICK YOUR FACE t-shirt is completely balls out. He wears a different
one to the ring. Nishimura comes into some Wagnerian opera screeching and the MUGA old
school robe. They start off non-MUGA-like by NOT working out of a headlock for seven minutes-
en lieu they trade forearms to the head with Kawada opting to kick Nishimura in the face.
Nishimura works on the knee as this sprints directly into MUGA spirit. Kawada is saved by the
first round bell and takes advantage by All Japan 1999 Suplexing Nishimura onto his head to
ease into the abdominal stretch. Nishimura reverses it and Kawada is already playing off all
three stylistic psychologies: King's Road, MUGA and British Round system. Then they take it to
the floor and brawl until the bell rings. They skip ahead to round 8 and it is basically Kawada
trying to knock out Nishimura with kicks and Nishimura working the knee. It makes one want to
see the other rounds. By round nine, Kawada is in full Kawada sell mode and they decide to
trade Backdrop Drivers. Kawada slaughters Nishimura with an AWWWESOME brainbuster and
whips out his Stretch Plum and it would soooo MUGA for Kawada to actually win with the
Stretch Plum in something that wasn't the first round of a Champion Carnival. Round 10 and

Nishimura can't answer the bell and Kawada beats the shit out of him some more. Osamu escapes a finishing Brainbuster and a few desperation roll-ups. Man, I fucking want to see all this. They trade forearms and Kawada takes a DragonScrew and fights out of a Figure Four and he sells it like he is Toshiaki Kawada. AND HE IS SAVED BY THE BELL! BROADWAY, DADDY! First. I want to see all of this. Second. I want a rematch already. Postmatch, they do odd calistenics. MUGA rules.

MIKE GRAHAM V RICK RUDE [G. Beheerder]: From some wacked-out June 1985 CWF episode, booked by a doped-up Mike Graham who likely was wearing shit-encrusted astronaut diapers at the time. I mean, really? Webster Graham booked to go toe-to-toe with the Ravishing One. This whole episode was just weird and sad -- every jobber was from Homosassa [most recently famous for the Jessica Lunsford's home before that fuckball Couey had his way with her] and Rip Oliver was getting a push, as was Hustler Rip Rogers. The work here was fine -- a back and forth match, and most of that is probably Graham leading Rude. Is that enough to remove my animus against Mike Graham? Not bloody likely*.

[*] Back in the 20th century, Championship Wrestling From Florida was one of the hottest promotions in the National Wrestling Alliance. Anyone who was anyone -- from Lou Thesz and Jack Brisco to Johnny Valentine and Ric Flair -- came through the state. I've written about it before, and likely will again; back in those days before Florida became a hotbed for major league sports, pro wrestling was a proven draw in towns large and small.

The driving impetus behind the company's success was Eddie Graham. The wrestler-turned-promoter was able to create a market saturation unchallenged -- with one major, notable exception in the mid-70s from some outfit called the "IWA" -- until after his suicide in the mid-1980s. From there, Daddy Graham was in the grave -- and his promotion, not too far behind.

Eddie Graham left an heir -- his son, Mike. Mike had been at or near the top of the card in Florida for over a decade in spite of some notable handicaps. He was about as charismatic as a booger on a towel, for one thing. For another thing, the flabby stood about 5'4" -- too short to be considered a credible main-eventer, or even a credible heavyweight. Nonetheless, he was Daddy's Boy, and so every superstar who came through Florida got the pleasure of carrying Graham through a main event match.

Part of the reason Graham got to headline even though his skills didn't merit it -- promoters liked to keep kinsmen at the top of the card, because they were less likely to go to other territories with little notice and leave promoters in lurches. Another part of the reason could've been that Daddy just wanted to keep as much of the purse as possible in the family. Eddie Graham wasn't known as a great "payoff" man, and the people who derived maximum benefit from the Florida territory by and large were the Grahams and the various old wrestlers with ownership stake.

^&^&^&^&^&^&^&^ MECHAMummy/MECHALite vs RoboKaz/RoboTAKA- NOSAWA GENOME- 11/8/2006- [DEAN RASMUSSEN]: Lenny posted this and he is melancholy and

misanthropic. MechaMummies SUCK. They didn't sell anything. Not even the cubic hypno-ray that RoboKAZ whips out. The Electronical mummies OBVIOUSLY cheat by using a drill. Midmatch, the RoboREF appears after his 60s theme music plays. All of the robots and robo-mummies take it to the floor and await the Slick 50 to start flying out of somebody's forehead. RoboTAKA takes a FABULOUS MOONSAULT CHESTDRILLING by MEchaLITE but the automoton called roboREF can only muster a two count. TAKA and KAZ tire of the robot life and TRANSFORM- like DUEL PHOENIXES from TWO DIFFERENT SETS OF ASHES- into the NORMAL MEN! The heartless machines use their opening to blast white powder into their oh so human eyes and get the pin. Angry humans revert back to their robot ways and dance a merry jig with the robot referee. Japan is a foreign country.

&*~&*~&*~&*~&*~&*~&* RIC FLAIR v MARK LEWIN [GemBeheerder]: Wow, New Zealand.
1983. I'd often wondered what Mark Lewin would be like as a regional babyface chasing the NWA title. This match allowed me to find out. JIP in Round 6, and it sure looks cheesy. Lewin isn't exactly agile, and Flair bumps around as you'd expect, and when he goes out of the ring he actually rolls under the apron to blade. It gets even better from here. Lewin has the moveset of the best worker in a Florida old age home, even bending at the waist at times during the match, like a lumbago ridden near-corpse trying to pet his mangy dog. Much of the match involves Flair staggering around the outside of the ring like that guy in Nirvana who managed to throw his bass guitar onto his head. So awesome. Flair gets in a little offense, but DUDE IT'S MARK LEWIN WHO THE HELL CAN CHOP MARK LEWIN, and that doesn't go too well either.

Youtube attempts to avert an international incident by trying to block me from watching this abortion: " This video is blocked from your viewing location due to restrictions requested by the content producer." Good try, but this doesn't stop me from seeing Flair job to the dreaded lewin sleeper, nor does it stop me from seeing dueling groin shots, or the most obvious refbumpvisionaryfallintothedustyfinish sequence since I saw Flair at Dorton Arena in 1986.

Lewin gets all the offense in this one, and if you have ever wanted to imagine what Bill Belichick would rattle like, you owe it to yourself to see this. Perhaps if Lewin had won the belt, he never would've become a Satanist. Who can say?

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THE DEATH VALLEY PLAYAZ